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JFK File: FBI, CIA Went On The Defensive

COMBINED NEWS SERVICES

Washington — Stamped "secret" for almost 30 years, the yellowed, dog-eared documents released last week on the Kennedy assassination tell a story of a CIA scrambling to protect its sources — and its reputation.

The nation's premier spy agency had an extensive dossier on accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald prior to the shooting. Almost from the moment the shots rang out killing John F. Kennedy, the damage control began.

"When the name of Lee Oswald was heard the effect was electric," one analyst wrote, recounting the atmosphere in CIA stations Nov. 22, 1963.

Newsweek magazine reports today that early findings of a joint investigative project including that publication, The Washington Post and CBS News found that information withheld by the FBI was done probably to conceal its own mistakes, though not to cover up any plot to kill the president. In fact, Newsweek didn't uncover any evidence of an assassination conspiracy.

But the Newsweek report claims that then-

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CIA Damage Control

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FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover lied when he told the Warren Commission, which investigated the assassination, that the bureau had no warning that Oswald was dangerous. In fact, Oswald had sent a threatening note in early November to the Dallas FBI office, though its contents are murky, says Newsweek. The agent who received the note failed to follow up, and was later ordered to get rid of the evidence, the magazine says. He reportedly flushed it down the toilet.

In the CIA's possession was information covering Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union in 1959, his return to the United States in 1961 with a Russian wife, and his trip to Mexico City seven weeks before the assassination, according to The Associated Press.

In the months that followed, the agency was under internal pressure to explain why it hadn't raised warning signals about Oswald to the FBI.

But as time wore on, the agency became increasingly concerned with a new problem — theories that it conspired to kill the president, according to an Associated Press review of documents at the National Archives.